

INCOME AND COMMUNITY

**3^{d.}
NOTES FOR DISCUSSION PUBLISHED
BY A GROUP OF PACIFIST-SOCIALISTS**

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PACIFISM, REVOLUTION AND
COMMUNITY, by ALEXANDER MILLER.

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INCOME AND COMMUNITY:

Notes for Discussion.

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INCOME and COMMUNITY

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Pacifist-Socialists

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*"May we look upon our treasures, the
furniture of our houses, and our gar-
ments, and try whether the seeds of
war have nourishment in these, our
possessions."*

John Woolman, Quaker, 1720-1772

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INTRODUCTION

These notes have been prepared by a group of pacifist-socialists. As socialists we believe that there is no sure way to peace which neglects, or even postpones, the necessary socialist transformation of society. In working to bring about this change we believe, as pacifists, that the socialist movement must examine the relevance of non-violent methods. When democratically gained steps towards socialism—or even towards a better standard of living—are threatened by vested interests, it is a gigantic and wasteful task to have to consolidate these gains by armed force. Superiority in arms lies almost wholly with monopoly-capital and fascism. To risk the revolution by relying, in the last resort, upon arms alone is dangerous. Revolution, to be lasting, must be non-violent. A carefully considered programme of non-violent revolutionary action, and a sense of solidarity that exceeds self-interest, can equip the people to withstand the shock of tyranny and to hold fast to that which they win.

Those who work for this new world order, therefore, will have to undergo hardship, to learn discipline, to make sacrifices. What sort of sacrifices are we making?

In time of war, more than at any other, the people of this country are being called upon to make sacrifices in the national interest. Pacifists are sometimes accused of escaping, through their beliefs, the sacrifices which their fellow citizens have to make in the fighting forces, and in civil defence. It often looks as though those who answer the call to arms *do* pay the heavier price. Pacifists, as an awkward minority, are well catered for.

Conscientious Objectors who appear before the Tribunals are continually asked what sacrifices they are prepared to make *as pacifists*. "You enjoy the privileges of citizenship which the State provides; are you not prepared to make any sacrifice in return when the State is in need?"

What is our answer? The ordeal of the Tribunal? Yes—it certainly calls for courage. A willingness to go to prison for our beliefs? Yes—but, to give them their due, it is the last thing the Tribunal wants a man to do, and it should surely be the last

resort of the Objector. Some form of alternative service then? Well—yes, if it will not help to further war. But what form of service does not do this indirectly?

Pacifists are the first to feel that a really constructive answer is not always forthcoming. Probably a part of the answer is that a pacifist cannot very well make the *same* sacrifices as the man who believes that the method of war is right because, in a sense, they do not both worship at the same altar. The soldier is willing to leave his family and to live in mud and blood for his beliefs. The pacifist is often willing—even anxious—to make an equal—greater, if possible—sacrifice for his faith, but his summons does not come solely as a result of war. Similarly National Service, as part of the machinery for furthering war, fails to make the right demand. It does not go to the heart of things.

A consciousness of the apparent disparity of sacrifice lies at the back of the minds of many sincere pacifists, and they often try to remedy it by attempting to “live out” the pacifist idea in their daily lives. They refuse to accept the normal standards of an unprincipled, war-conditioned society, and try to get back to fundamentals, not only in their relationships with one another, but with the economic order and the world in general.

A striking witness to these ideas has been seen, during recent years, in the growth of the Community movement. Experiments ranging from large-scale self-supporting agricultural communities, to work-camps, allotment schemes, craft-producing centres, nuclei of people living communally, or little income-sharing groups, have sprung up and multiplied, and in and through them people have tried to express a new way of living that would cut clear from the confusion and compromise common to a competitive-capitalist state of society. In their enthusiasm for these new experimental relationships, many of which involve very real hardship and self-sacrifice, there has been a tendency, however, for people to lose sight of the real conflict which first impelled them to take these tentative steps towards a new way of living.

In *Pacifism, Revolution and Community* Alexander Miller points out the possibility of a mode of social behaviour which is the concern of pacifists and socialists alike: it not only involves sacrifice but recognises the realities of the struggle in which both are involved. He says:

"A good deal of thinking and acting in terms of it though it is not valueless or socially insignificant, seems imperfectly related to scientific socialism, and out of touch with the day-to-day struggle of the workers.

Is there some way by which the impulse to community can take a social form which relates directly to the socialist analysis and takes realistic account of the class struggle? Is it possible to actualise community, in common sharing and mutual responsibility, without a withdrawal from working-class organisation and revolutionary action?"

"There seems no reason why the essence of the matter should not be realised without any kind of communal living at all. There is a way of regulating one's personal life, on a basis of approximate justice, which takes account of the basic division of society into privileged and under-privileged.

If it is possible to discover what one person's share of the spending power of the community is, it seems the plainest kind of justice (if one is earning more than this amount) to restrict one's expenditure to it, and to return the balance to the community in the most constructive way possible.

The best approximation possible in England shows that the spending power available yearly, if divided equally, would give each adult something like a hundred pounds, with shares proportionately less for children." (This is the "National Average".)

"The vital thing is that socialists should realise that it is just as much a revolutionary obligation to act justly, so far as that may be possible within the social framework, as it is to take part in socialist activity of an organisational kind. Neglect of this has rotted the socialist movement from the inside, in spite of its organisational strength."

The notes which follow examine this aspect of community in greater detail and suggest ways in which groups and individuals can go to work on the basis of the National Average. They discuss, too, the relevance of the self-subsisting communities to the struggle for socialism.


Much of the material used in *Income and Community* has been built upon the criticism and suggestions which have been received as a result of the publication of *Pacifism, Revolution and Community*.

Spring, 1940


PATRICK WILSON

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL INCOME, 1929

Based on a diagram from "The Condition of Britain" by G. D. H. & M. I. Cole (Gollancz)

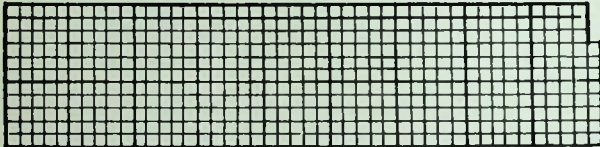
 (10,000 approx.): Over £10,000

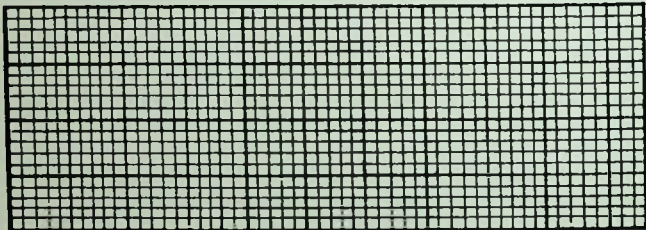
 (100,000 approx.): £2,000-£10,000

 (200,000 approx.): £1,000-£2,000

 (510,000 approx.): £500-£1,000

 (1,530,000 approx.): £250-£500

 (4,920,000 approx.): £125-£250

 (10,600,000 approx.): Under £125

Each square represents ten thousand possessors of Income

I

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

There are enormous inequalities in the distribution of income in this country. Statistics should be used with caution, but the diagram opposite gives an approximate idea of the division of the national income. It should be noted that we are here considering *Income* (what a person earns or receives currently) and not *Wealth* (property—what a person owns). Reference to the latter is made later.

II

HOW THE "NATIONAL AVERAGE" IS CALCULATED

The National Average is the total national income divided by the total population. In Britain this has been calculated as a hundred pounds a year per adult head and a proportional allowance has to be made for children.

(Someone may ask "Why stop short at Britain? She enjoys a higher standard of living than most countries because of her empire. Should not the average, in justice, include its inhabitants too? Or, to reach a real international equality, why not calculate the average income of the total world population?")

In a fully industrialised twentieth-century capitalist civilisation the normal man will find it quite impossible to exist at the level to which the average will drop when such extremes of poverty are included as that endured by the peasants, untouchables, and native populations of empires. We must be careful, therefore, not to turn aside from a practicable mode of action, which is, in fact, our duty, for the sake of an abstract generalisation which represents a purity of theory that obscures, rather than illumines, the problem as it concerns Britain.)

W. A. Morris,* basing his calculations on figures quoted by Colin Clark in *National Income and Outlay*, reckons £85 as the average for every man, woman, and child, or £170 per occupied person. The average for a male worker is about £3 a week. It looks, therefore, as though the figure of £100 bears some relation to average conditions.

It may be argued that the presence in the community of people like Lord Nuffield sends the average above a truly representative level. R. Palme Dutt† says that the conception of a "National Income", on a basis of the aggregate of individual incomes, is "fallacious". But so small is the percentage of wealthy individuals in the community as a whole (the diagram on page 6 makes this abundantly clear) that their enormous incomes affect the average extraordinarily little.

It must be admitted, however, that though a hundred pounds may be a fair statistical average for the community as a whole, it is undoubtedly generous when compared with working-class conditions. For years the railways have failed to pay a minimum wage of 50/- a week. The docker or the miner who is compelled to work short time has often found that his income is actually *less* than the dole. In fact, for many working-class families a hundred pounds a head per annum, with an allowance for children, would make all the difference between constant ill-health and under nourishment and a bearable standard of comfort.

In order that an approximation to justice may be arrived at the calculation of a National Average has to be somewhat simplified. Wealth, social services, and other factors enter into any such calculations and complicate the issue to a certain extent. For a clear analysis of these factors readers are referred to Sections IV, "The Nation's Income"; V, "How the Income is Divided"; and VI, "The Class Structure of the Nation", in Chapter I, and Sections II, "Wage Rates by Industries and Groups"; III, "Wages and Earnings"; and IV, "Standards of Subsistence", in Chapter V of G. D. H. and M. I. Cole's *The Condition of Britain* (Gollancz, 7/6; Left Book Club, 3/6). Those who have not already done so should also read Sir John Orr's report on a survey of the adequacy of diet in relation to income (*Food, Health, and Income*) in which he estimates that 10% of the families in the country have less than 10/- and 20% only between 10/- and 15/- to consume per head per week.

* "Earning and Spending", by W. A. Morris. *Nelson Discussion Book*, No. 14.

† "Average Incomes: A Fallacy", by R. Palme Dutt. *Daily Worker*, 3/7/39.

III

THE ETHICS OF AN AVERAGE INCOME

But first let us consider the personal obligation of acting justly, which, in approximate economic terms, it has been suggested, means limiting personal expenditure to £100 a year (if one is receiving more), whatever else it may involve. The exact figure need not concern us for the moment. The question is whether this kind of limitation, with reference to economic facts as they concern Britain, has any relevance at all. *Can the man who values a just society sufficiently to work for it consistently be indifferent to just action by individuals or by groups NOW?* If it can be discovered what just action is, then we ought to act that way.

People of more than average means often urge that it ought not to be necessary to lower anybody's income, but that "the poor should be raised to the level of the rich". On the face of it this hardly seems unreasonable in an age of scientific invention and unparalleled industrial output, but the fact remains that a capitalist system of production tends, more and more, to isolate plenty, to put it into cold storage, so that wealth remains potential rather than actual, with the result that the average yearly income is still no more than £100 a head in spite of the apparent abundance.

Moreover, wealth will continue to wait for man until the means of its production are owned by the whole community, instead of by private individuals, and its distribution is scientifically planned as part of a socialist economy. Until such time as this already overdue reconstruction takes place, therefore, the "poor" *cannot* be "raised to the level of the rich". Either the rich voluntarily remedy the inequalities *now*, or pressure of events will take the matter out of their hands.

From some points of view—certainly from a Christian view—it is difficult to see how anyone who enjoys a larger share of the community resources than his fellow men can talk about social issues at all with any sincerity. The fact that he is involved in an inequitable social system cannot justify him, nor excuse him from trying, here and now, to remedy its inequalities where they are expressed in his personal mode of life and behaviour.

There are arguments against this point of view which can best be summed up as follows:

"There are few who would defend the big inequalities in the distribution of the national income to which you have pointed, but does not the injustice have its roots in the way in which people *make* their money? The class war with which Marx was concerned was not a war between rich and poor, as such, but between those who gained their income (large or small) in one way, by making profits, and those who gained it in another, by earning wages. This difference is important psychologically and spiritually. We see it, for example, in the contrast between the proletarian dockyard worker or the clerk who is a keen member of his Trade Union and the equally poor—often indeed poorer—*petit-bourgeois* types, small shop-keepers and stall-holders, landladies, and the like. It is not only the rich who are reactionary; capitalism corrupts the poor just as surely.

Further than this, is equality of income a very desirable thing? What about incentive? Equal pay is certainly not assumed in a socialist State.* Socialism expects 'from each according to his ability' and gives '*to each according to his work*'. Under socialism the land and raw materials, the mines and factories, are administered on a co-operative basis and society is rid of the profit-making motive, but it does not produce anything like equality. It has been calculated that the ratio between the most a man can reasonably need for the use (not investment) of himself and his family and the basic requirements of health is somewhere in the region of seven to one. When socialism is established we are likely to have this approximate ratio of wage difference."

So far as they go these are not unreasonable questions, but socialism is only a step towards communism, and a communist State,† whatever else it may do, expects from "each according to his ability" but gives "*to each according to his need*", and this appears to be the nearest that any theoretical State will approach (in our time) to the Christian ideal of equality, which is not that all men are necessarily equal, but that they are of equal value.

* Read John Strachey's pamphlet *Why You should be a Socialist* (Gollancz, 2d.). Equality of income is discussed on p. 70.

† The word "communist" is much misused. It is a mistake, for example, to speak of Soviet Russia as a "communist State". Roughly speaking, Russia is at the crawling stage of socialist infancy. This sentence from a report on the third session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., held in May 1939, illustrates the point:

"The results so far achieved are only the beginning of the drive (for increased productivity and technical skill) to achieve the real abundance which will secure the transition to communism."

As for incentive we must look beyond socialism to the time when the struggle for existence ceases to be the dominating motive in men's minds. When material needs are supplied as a matter of course and the self-seeking idea that saturates every phase of life in capitalist society is replaced by co-operation, it will be the work men do and their reasons for doing it which will provide incentive, rather than the wages they receive.

If, therefore, in some theoretical future State we would be prepared to take no more than our fair share from the community resources for the work we do—irrespective of its cash-value to the community—the issue to-day seems clear. Those who feel equality to be desirable can only try to put it into practice—NOW.

IV

INCOME AND EFFICIENCY: WHOSE EFFICIENCY?

At this point the enthusiastic worker for a new social order may well sigh. He already finds it difficult to make ends meet because of the demands made on his surplus (if he has any) by the organisations in which he is interested and the self-education which such an interest involves. The fact that his conscience probably even now will not allow him to enjoy his comfortable income in an unjust world might seem sufficient proof of his genuineness. It probably is. It is also probably true that he will be hindering his attempts to remedy the inequality he already feels by limiting his expenditure still further.

Apart from this there is the question of sheer efficiency. A lot of the work a man does to further the cause he has at heart depends, quite often, on his privileged position. He may run a car to the benefit of the group to which he belongs, or an organisation may rely on him for part of its funds, without which it might be unable to carry on useful work: the existence of many organisations depends entirely on their small but regular contributors.

The answer to all this seems to be that those who earn more than the National Average, however honest their intention, do quite definitely hold privileged positions because they have the

power to decide what they shall do with their surplus. This is something which the great mass of wage-earners never experience. The cultural activities or distractions which they enjoy are usually at the expense of some other real necessity. Their way of life involves continual sacrifice if it is to provide more than the bread in their mouths and a roof over their heads.

The socialist with a car has, subject to the dictates of conscience, absolute power to decide the uses to which it shall be put. He can *lend* it, but he does not *give* it. The pacifist who subscribes to such and such an organisation has the *power* of deciding where his subscription shall go. However wisely it is used he cannot get rid of the power that money gives. This can only be done by the complete surrender of the privileges of surplus income—by giving up the surplus itself. To do this does not imply that a man is afraid of using his own judgment or doubtful of the good use he is making of his surplus. It is a matter of common justice. It is also, to a certain extent, a matter of efficiency, for a group can usually make a better use of surplus than an individual. For one thing it probably has more surplus to handle, and for another it does at least ensure that those in a group who *can* make good use of cars, travel, subscriptions to journals, societies, etc., have the opportunity to do so, irrespective of their income level.

It might conceivably be argued that a person willing to surrender his surplus would take very good care that it was to a group that would use it in the ways he would normally choose for himself, and that therefore he is not making any very serious sacrifice. But if the National Average bears a just relation to the economic condition of society as a whole (and the figure of £100 is open to criticism on this score) it will be seen that there is more in it than just a wise disposal of surplus or the provisions of a benefit club. It ties a person to the community.

Carried to its logical conclusion the acceptance of the idea of the National Average would, under capitalism, mean returning the surplus to the Chancellor of the Exchequer who would put it back into circulation, or into social services, and thus raise the general level of the Average. But this is obviously impossible in a State where every penny that can be squeezed out of the national income is turned into armaments. Some sort of pooling amongst those who are striving to bring this state of society to an end is therefore indicated.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A GROUP

(i) *The Isolated Individual.* It is perfectly possible for an individual to put the idea of the National Average into practice in his own personal life without consulting anyone else about it. If, for some reason, he is prevented from co-operating with others in revolutionary activity of an organisational kind he can at least stand out of the way of the oncoming world order by voluntarily de-classing himself. By surrendering the privileges which accrue from the present system he learns to think and behave, here and now, in terms of the new order of justice and equality.

Nevertheless there are many advantages to be gained, in mutual responsibility and common sharing, if surplus income is pooled by a group. The suggestions which follow are made as a result of the discussions and practical experiences of a group of people who have been working together on the basis of the National Average.

(ii) *Community of Purpose.* A group in which pooling of surplus income takes place should not be large—preferably a group of friends whose work brings them together in a common cause. It should be the work they are doing, rather than the desire to pool surplus income, that brings them together in the first place. They need not necessarily be of the same denomination or even organisation; mixed groups benefit from the inter-play of differing views. Cells within the socialist movement: F.O.R., P.P.U., and other groups within the Peace Movement; Christian groups, clubs, and church congregations: these suggest themselves as natural communities from which people can be drawn to work together.

A group should probably remain a personal unit; if it grows to such proportions that it begins to lose touch with individual members, it will tend to disintegrate.

(iii) *Equality in Practice.* Members should aim at a real equality within the group. This means that not only those earning *more* but those earning *less* will be taking their share from the pool. When each member of a group, irrespective of his earnings, handles his fair share of the community resources and gives an account of it, it not only adds to the general well-being

of the group but ensures that its individual members—at least—are freed from an economic anxiety that might otherwise impair their efficiency in group activities. It will be recognised that as great a moral decision is involved in taking from the pool as in contributing.

(iv) *The Inequality of Needs.* Needs vary. So much depends on environment and upbringing. In groups where income levels differ widely very different walks of life will be represented. Some will be manual, some professional workers. Each occupation normally means a different expenditure level.

To overcome these inequalities each member sends in a Return of his income and his needs. It is a written statement* saying how much he earns, and how much he spends on himself. All future expenditure is estimated with the National Average in mind.

Over and above this, however, are the expenses which one's work may involve. A man in a bank might logically claim that the clothes he was expected to wear amounted to "uniform" and were an expense peculiar to his work. A traveller spends more on getting about; a craftsman needs tools; a minister—books; and so on. These are entered on the Returns as Extras and are to be distinguished from, say, holidays spent abroad. If anyone feels more entitled to a holiday abroad than other folk he can say so. If he can holiday abroad *and* live—on the National Average—that is his affair; what each person does within the limits of the £100 is a personal matter. But there should be a distinction between privileges normally enjoyed solely as a result of a higher income and the demands that are made by one's occupation. We should, in the words of a Hebridean prayer, "weigh our wants in the scales of our needs".

Other Extras which may have to be included on a Return are commitments which have been undertaken before the idea of joining such a group arises. Some individual or organisation may be partially dependent on a member, and to bring the support to a sudden end might cause unnecessary difficulties.

Income Tax also has to be treated as an Extra.

The question of personal insurance in a capitalist community raises a multitude of problems to which there is no ready-made solution. Again, one can only keep constantly in mind the opportunities of the individual of average income level. Those earning

* Examples of typical Income Returns are given on pages 22-24.

more than the National Average often do not qualify for certain benefits. They may not be eligible for health insurance, pensions, or unemployment pay, and if they go to hospital they are assessed according to income. Possibly these people should set aside a proportion of their surplus as "insurance" against the risks for which those earning less are compulsorily insured. Lest anyone should think it illogical for those who are attempting to shake off a system of capitalist values to accept the benefits of State insurance, it should be stressed that social services are a *right* and not a privilege. In the socialist State social services can be immeasurably increased, but until then we should try to strengthen such as we have, and be alert to protect them against encroachment.

When completed the Returns are circulated within the group. In this way the Extras are open to scrutiny and are, in a sense, checked and the full degree of privilege thus taken from them. Those who earn less than the National Average make similar Returns and claim, equally, the Extras they feel to be indispensable.

(v) *Does Usefulness Depend on Income?* Claims for Extras that influence one's usefulness as a revolutionary, be it pacifist, socialist, or Christian, are more difficult to assess. Certainly those used to middle-class standards of comfort will find it hard to decide where to draw the line.

The curse of a class-divided community lies in the barriers of privilege which people put around their particular social sphere, privilege which ultimately depends upon income. Some folk make a misery of their lives—a real miserliness—by attempting to live in one particular sphere whilst struggling to make ends meet at a lower income level.

As soon as the standards of a social group become a barrier they become artificial, and it is time for professing revolutionaries to break through and awaken people to the need for personal, as well as political, revolution. In all the outward conformities we should be feeling for a new non-conformity—an attitude that sifts each standard and accepts that of worth in it without letting observance of it breed exclusiveness.

Can anyone conscientiously claim that he has to keep up a certain standard of living, with its attendant comforts, because he is thereby enabled to talk revolution, without being ostracised, to people who live at that particular level? Or will real revolutionary

intention imply a refusal to conform to standards that are, in their origin, based upon privilege—the fruit of injustice and inequality?

(vi) *Cultural Equality*. Following on from what has been said, it is presumed that members of a group such as we are discussing will not feel entitled to other cultural, recreational, or educational facilities than those available to people of National Average income level.

Privilege was never more obvious in this country than in its system of education—to take one example. Working-class parents have no choice but to accept what the State provides. Some children may win scholarships,* but the economic environment of the home is often the deciding factor. In making our personal decision we have to work within the existing social order. We cannot “contract out” in the educational field any more than we can, with justice, avoid our duty in the economic. But there are compensations, even in a capitalist society, for many schools are already in advance of the State that supports them. It is not only teachers in “progressive” schools who hold progressive views; teachers in State schools, too, are often only too glad to find parents prepared to take an interest in the children’s school. It is also, perhaps, a mistake to think that only a “progressive” school or an expensive education can equip a child for a full and useful life. It is often difficult to avoid giving a child an unconscious sense of superiority if it has a superior education to that of other children—the children of unprivileged parents.

In a group, therefore, parents will probably wish their children to be treated equally at a National Average income level. Parents of those that showed especial ability might consult the group and, if all else failed, put down on their return an Extra for special educational expenses.

(vii) *Wealth*. The acquiring of wealth (savings, investments, unearned income, etc.) is the natural development, under capitalism, of the acquisitive and self-protective instincts. In the communal State, with its wealth of goods and abundance of personal property, it will not be necessary to save or hoard “against an emergency” that is no longer there. Until then it is

* These, too, are apparently to be regarded as a privilege and not a right. A Conscientious Objector had his case dismissed by the Leeds Tribunal: according to a report in *The Friend* (16/2/40), “the Chairman emphasised the fact that he had received municipal scholarships for his training at the College of Art, and said he owed a duty to the State”.

questionable whether any one of us is entitled to "securities" while the majority of the community live in a continual state of insecurity.

Any individual who has "savings" of this sort says so on the Return. There may be a testing time ahead for groups of people who are prepared to suffer for their views (C.O.s, strikers, victims of political persecution, the "outcast" in general), and their special need may compel them to go forward (rather than fall back) on mutual resources.

(viii) *The Pool*. The work that brings them together is the primary concern of a group. There is a danger of making the surplus itself a group activity and of regarding jobs with an eye to how much they will contribute to the pool. This is inconsistent with the main thesis that the possession of financial power is, corporately or individually, to be avoided. Members of groups like these will certainly be as much concerned with how they *make* their money as how they *use* it. If the pool drops so that those below the National Average cannot be brought right up to it, this becomes the concern of the whole group. The group should only undertake financial commitments for which it can budget in advance, otherwise the withdrawal of contributing members becomes difficult, and this is undesirable.

The uses to which a pool is put will depend upon the nature of the group concerned. Apart from the equalising of incomes within the group itself a few examples will be sufficient; others will inevitably suggest themselves.

- (1) Journals, periodicals, etc., can be subscribed to and circulated amongst members. Books of particular relevance to the group's work can be jointly owned.
- (2) Refugees, C.O.s, unemployed, or people whose needs become the special concern of any group, can be helped much more easily in this collective way than by a private individual.
- (3) Conferences, meetings, lectures, and the travel involved in attending them, can be undertaken on behalf of the group by its individual members. Speakers can be sent out by the group.
- (4) The group can publish its own propaganda in the form of leaflets, booklets, etc.

In these and many other ways the general concern of a group may be implemented. It becomes independent of the vagaries of individual donations on which work of this sort often has to depend.

One member should administer the pool and circulate the Returns. Accurate accounts should be kept in case of difficulties or sudden withdrawals from the group. There is nothing particularly sub-Christian about bookkeeping, yet so often the dislike of "business formalities" leads to careless organisation.

(ix) *Communal Living?* The suggestion of these notes is that those who dislike the inequalities natural to capitalist society can remedy the injustice without "contracting out" of the community or even coming under a common roof. Admittedly the mechanics of living are very much simplified in a communal household, and expenses reduced, but many people are precluded from this sort of life by a disinclination to live at too close quarters with their friends. Only those who feel a very real urge to do so need share their homes. There is a certain type of forced community—an attempt to demonstrate or prove something—that casts a self-conscious cloak over the essentials of a real community.

Is a collection of families and individuals a more natural "unit" for a community than the family itself? Is it unnatural for some to prefer their private burrows? So long as we remember our inseparability from the greater community of mankind there seems to be no need for hard and fast rules on these questions.

VI

COMMUNITY AND CLASS STRUGGLE*

The personal act of equating one's income with a National Average is not expected to have economic repercussions on a national scale. It is no attempt to introduce socialism by the back door. It is an endeavour, in so far as the social system allows, to

* We are grateful to the Editor of *The Socialist Christian* for permission to reprint a part of this section which appeared as an article in the February number of that journal.

act justly and to create an equality usually visualised in a Christian communist way of life. It cannot, therefore, be claimed to represent any other kind of "community" than that which should be expressed by the social order itself.

What is known as the Community Movement has spread rapidly in recent years. It is one of the symptoms of the dissatisfaction which life under capitalism breeds. We referred in the Introduction to experiments ranging from large-scale agricultural Communities to small income-sharing groups. Up to now nearly all attempts of this kind have had religious origins.

But many of these Communities engender a very real sense of "separation", of having "contracted out" of the social system. That the Community Movement itself is aware of this is shown in its various publications, where its writers are at pains to disprove the idea that Community is an "escape". What is it that gives rise to this impression?

It may derive in part from the rural remoteness of many Communities, but physical isolation is hardly a handicap in an age of cars, wireless and telephones. One of Britain's most isolated Communities sees something like five thousand visitors in a year.

Nor is it, in fact, a political isolation, for to work for a new social order *is* to be political, and if the Community Movement becomes in any sense a challenge to the validity of capitalist economics (as it must if it continues to grow) it will be subjected to the same repressive forces that reaction brings to bear on a militant working class movement. It will be caught up, willy nilly, in the political struggle. The Bruderhof bravely endured two years under Nazi rule, but was finally driven to seek refuge in England in order to continue its existence. It was a victim of political repression because it had become a challenge to the life around it. Like that of other Community experiments this challenge lay in its example. It offered peace, co-operation, and goodwill to all men, irrespective of their "labels". It believed in regeneration rather than revolution. It was a practical demonstration rather than an attempt to impose a way of life, a take-it-or-leave-it affair, but it had passive political significance.

It is a direct loss to the socialist movement that those who are prepared to make a stand in this way, even to pay a heavy price, for Christian values have tended to isolate themselves from day-

to-day political activity. It cannot be excused on the grounds that the socialist movement is unsympathetic or may have lost its "spiritual motive". "The socialist criticism of the 'escape to Community' may spring from a failure to realise how critical the times are and a refusal to face the fact that the struggle against fascism must be carried *beyond politics*. The defence of freedom may depend at least as much upon minority groups prepared for martyrdom as it does upon mass movements mobilised for war."* But unless these minority groups are fully alive to the part that they are playing in the political struggle their witness may be weakened for want of understanding.

Does this not largely account for the feeling of unreality? Have those seeking for a new community been too impatient to unravel the tangle of political decisions that lie before them? The desire to cut clear from the paraphernalia of political activity is a natural enough reaction against the confusion of thought into which disputes over hours of work, rates of pay, dilution of labour, etc., etc., may lead unless we keep steady heads. But history is being shaped by political decisions and we cannot by-pass them. We are, at all times, members of the whole family of mankind and cannot escape our responsibilities as members of its greater community. If trades unions and local and parliamentary government are the means whereby our fellow men express themselves, then we are concerned in such things. We are even more concerned if we feel them to be inadequate.

The self-subsisting Community exists solely because the greater community is tolerant. It is even to a certain extent parasitic when, for example, it appeals to the greater community for capital and support, or uses its telephones and toothbrushes. However independent its spirit, it cannot be "in the world and yet not of it" in a material sense. Its future is inextricably bound up with the political decisions made by (or for) the greater community. The Nazi community had no room for the *Bruderhof*. Suppose we, and other communities of peoples, are driven to totalitarianism, what then? Where will the *Bruderhof* go? How can the self-supporting Community survive? If its people are not martyred they will be expropriated and driven underground.

And underground they will find themselves by the side of those engaged in a political struggle—the fight for freedom and the

* *Pacifism, Revolution, and Community*, p. 28.

right to exist—which ultimately resolves itself into a class struggle, the struggle between the privileged owners of the means of production—the profit makers and their parasites, and the unprivileged who have no other means of living than to sell their labour—the workers. It is this struggle that is so often unrecognised, yet we take part in its unnatural divisions unconsciously because they are forced upon us by the exigencies of the social system.

Although it is this corrupt system that has rotted the fabric of the greater community, we cannot, by seeking to create a new community outside the social struggle, escape the responsibility of working for a change of social system. To this end an approximate justice and a rough equality are embodied in the idea of the National Average which denies the values of the present social order and affirms our membership of the greater community.

APPENDIX

TYPICAL INCOME RETURNS

The examples of "Returns" which follow show some of the variations possible within a group.

One example is of a family earning less than the National Average, but no examples of family *budgets* below the National Average are given. Examples of these can be found in any of the numerous publications on social conditions.

STATEMENT OF INCOME OF CLERK, WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN

INCOME

					per annum	£	s.	d.
Husband's salary	{	7 months at	£156	0	0 per annum	91	0	0
		5 months at	£168	0	0 per annum	70	0	0
						161	0	0
					Payments from pool	60	0	0
					TOTAL	£221	0	0

EXPENDITURE

						£	s.	d.
Payment on house, 17/6 per week	..	..	..	..		45	10	0
Heat and light 5/- per week	..	..	..	..		13	0	0
House repairs, garden, etc.	..	..	..	..		5	14	0
Housekeeping 32/6 per week	..	..	..	..		84	10	0
Payment on furniture	..	..	..	..		7	0	0
Insurance: National Health, Unemployment Insurance, Hospital Savings Association	..	..	..	..		7	14	6
Donations, Subscriptions, etc.	..	..	..	..		2	14	0
Holidays (Camping)	..	..	..	..		6	10	0
Personal: Clothes, pocket money, fares, postage, etc.	..	..	..	..		32	0	0
We have been helped by wife's parents during difficult times in past; since death of wife's father we have contributed to mother's Income	..	..	..	..		12	0	0
To reserve	..	..	..	..		4	7	6
					TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£221	0	0

I. Typical return of married couple with two children.
(Income £161 p.a.)

STATEMENT OF INCOME OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLMASTER AND WIFE

INCOME		per annum		
		£	s.	d.
Husband's salary as Teacher (superannuation already deducted)		280	0	0
Wife has worked as supply Teacher in past but will not continue this after the autumn; earnings for this year, say		20	0	0
Wife has small annuity under grandfather's will		26	0	0
TOTAL		£326	0	0
EXPENDITURE				
		£	s.	d.
House: Rent and Rates	23/6	} per week	81	18 0
Gas, electricity and coal	5/6			
Telephone	2/6			
Food: Housekeeping	17/-	} per week	57	4 0
Midday meals out	7/-			
Fares, 7/- per week			18	4 0
Clothes			13	0 0
Holidays (chiefly spent on travel, fares, etc., in walking abroad —one of the best ways, we find, of keeping fresh for our particular work; includes conferences, holiday courses, etc.			25	0 0
Sundries: Stationery, postage, papers, pocket-money, etc.				
7/6 per week			19	10 0
Typewriter, 2/- per week			5	4 0
			£220	0 0
ADDITIONAL TO ABOVE				
Income-tax (approx.)			11	0 0
Health Insurance (Teachers' Provident), etc.			5	15 0
Subscriptions to which we are committed and cannot withdraw, N.U.T., etc.			4	5 0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		£241	0	0
TOTAL INCOME		£326	0	0
EXPECTED SURPLUS		£85	0	0

SAVINGS

Husband has £15 10 0 in Post Office, but we shall keep this as a reserve unless the group is near bankruptcy.

Wife's annuity is from an investment in some property in the North, but is under Trust and consequently inaccessible; the group must make best possible use of interest.

II. Typical Income Return of Married Couple (Income £326 p.a.)

STATEMENT OF INCOME OF A JOURNALIST

	per annum		
	£	s.	d.
Income variable: The Geneva Office will pay me a fixed salary for editing the Y.O. Bulletin	350	0	0
The remainder is from freelance work and a small contract with the syndicated press. In the past this has brought in up to £400 a year, but owing to the war, and the fact that I am to spend a large part of my time in Switzerland, it may decrease; say	300	0	0
APPROXIMATE TOTAL INCOME	£650	0	0

EXPENDITURE

Household expenses; through sharing a flat these are lower than they might otherwise be	60	0	0
Food: My colleague and I are away a great deal but our flat, when occupied, is used for a variety of activities which involve hospitality	50	0	0
Clothes	20	0	0
Holidays	15	0	0
Travelling; This is mainly in connection with my own work; there is a system of travelling allowances for work in connection with the Bulletin. I also do some voluntary speaking and lecturing which involves travel	25	0	0
Donations, subscriptions, etc.	10	0	0
Life Insurance; This was started for me by my father; if the group has no objection I shall continue with it as we have no contributory pensions scheme	25	0	0
	205	0	0
Income Tax (approx.)	110	0	0

APPROXIMATE TOTAL EXPENDITURE £315 0 0

Income Tax apart, the above is double the National Average, but until I have had a full year in my new work it is difficult to say whether these figures are accurate. I have allowed generously for clothes; it is liable to be expensive if I have to follow news to the tropics—or Finland. The sums for rent and food are more than you will be paying in England, partly because prices are higher in Switzerland and partly because my colleague and I, while anxious to live as simply as possible, are probably affected by the professional standards of our fellow workers.

When I have a year's accounts to work on I shall be able to see ways in which I can cut down expenses so that I am nearer the level at which you are living. Until then I should be able to contribute, say, £350 to the pool.

Savings: I have a small bank balance which I shall have to keep as an emergency reserve, but apart from this there are no savings or unearned income.

III. Typical return of single man (income £650 per annum).





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